

SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE

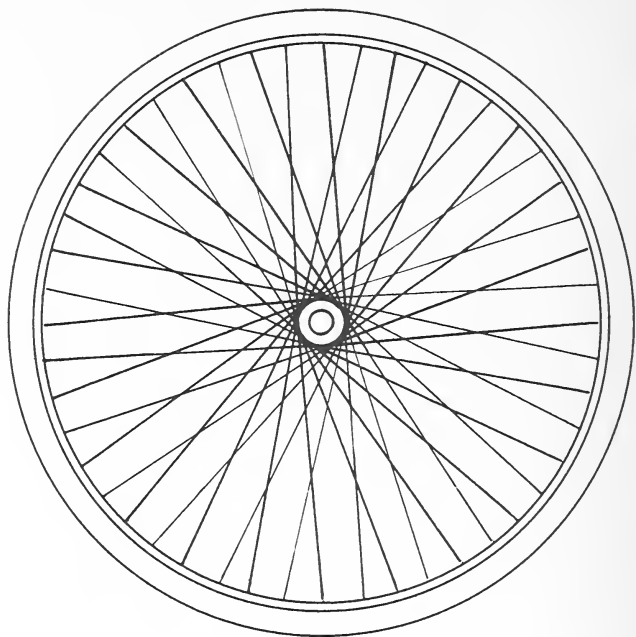


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ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES



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Of all the problems that beset modern society, the one which is most pervasive and whose solution will require the broadest array of talents and varieties of educational experience is that which we call "The Environmental Crisis."

To help yourself understand this point, imagine all the facets of your environment as the spokes of a bicycle wheel. The hub of the wheel is you, your town, your state or nation. All the spokes radiate inward toward the hub, all are dependent upon one another. They bear labels such as Industry, Aesthetics, Population, Pollution, Employment, Resources and the like: Our wheel probably has hundreds of such spokes.

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The point is that no single one of these many parts can be said to have *caused* the environmental crisis. All ecological systems are made to go around by the working of interdependent parts, and the human environment is no exception. Change



the length or tension of one spoke, and all the others strain to respond. Properly adjusted, our wheel rolls smoothly; if not, it gets out-of-round, wobbles, and can cause a crash.

This should help you understand why trained environmentalists must grasp many sides of a crisis, and why solution of environmental problems, as we said in the beginning, "will require the broadest array of talents and varieties of educational experience."



To illustrate this point, let's draw upon one of the commonest examples of an environmental problem, the pollution of a river.

Spoke 1 (Industry): A paper mill dumps its wastes into the river.

Spoke 2 (Public Health): The river will make you sick if you

drink it.

Spoke 3 (Resource Management): In its present state, the river can be used only for waste disposal.

Spoke 4 (Employment): The paper mill has three-quarters of the town's labor force on its payroll.

Spoke 5 (Population): The town produces more domestic sewage than the river can absorb.

Spoke 6 (Aesthetics): The river stinks.

But it's simple, you say, to clean up our beleaguered river. Just pass a law and stop the pollution.

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Now the spokes of the wheel really begin to strain. The paper mill cannot make paper without getting rid of its wastes, but the law has been passed, so the plant shuts down. Three-quarters of the town's labor force is thrown out of work. They leave town to find work elsewhere; the remaining quarter — bankers, plumbers, grocers and small boys with paper routes — are without income and they leave too. With the human population gone, so vanishes the other source of river pollution.



Before long, the river is clean again, but only ghosts and fishes are there to enjoy it.

Aha, you say. Not even a high school dropout would propose such a simple-minded "solution," and besides, haven't you exaggerated just a little bit?

Only a little. The face of America has many such towns and such rivers. Almost every community has its polluters, and many people want to eliminate environmental degradation without giving much thought to *all* the consequences. But the more enduring and common tragedy is that the very complexity of environmental problems often frightens people away from even *trying* to solve them.

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That is the real reason we at Sweet Briar felt the need for a multidisciplinary Environmental Studies Program, one of the strengths of which is the Coordinate Major.

In the Coordinate Major, you can combine an emphasis upon — and a concern for — human ecology with an interest in *any* regular departmental major. This is important. The Coordinate Major is not restricted to the sciences, though they are an important part of the Program. You could, for example, major in English, Art History, Anthropology or Physics, and in each case coordinate your major with the Environmental Studies Program.

Here's how it's done. If by the end of your sophomore year you have yourself pretty well sized up, if you know what kinds of intellectual activities you enjoy, do well in and regard as important, you are ready to choose a major department. So, you seek out the Chairman of that department for a chat. If your commitment to environmental problems hasn't waned, the Chairman will suggest that you talk to the Environmental Studies Coordinator. The result of all this conversation? Your last two years of study will be planned around your interests and within both departmental and Program requirements.

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Each department has its own course requirements for the B.A.; you'll find them in the Sweet Briar catalog. There also you will find Environmental Studies Program requirements, which we summarize here:

First, we will ask you to take ENV 102. This is the core course, offered one term a year, in which professors from about a dozen different departments focus their respective disciplines on environmental concepts.

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## Specimens:

*Anthropology:* How do primitive tribes view their environments, and how did primitive cultures enforce environmental regulations?

*Religion:* What features of the Judeo-Christian tradition have influenced our treatment of the natural world throughout history?

*Physics:* What fundamental principles govern and help us predict energy shortages, and how can we survive despite our diminishing resources?

*English:* What did Mark Twain, Thoreau and Cooper, in the previous century, say about the problems we face today?

*Government:* Why is environmental legislation, no matter how good it is, so difficult to enforce?

*Economics:* Can taxes and subsidies be used to improve the quality of our environment? Or should polluters pay?



These and hundreds of other questions, posed from multiple points of view, make quite a broth of a course, with students given opportunities to state their views and ask questions during frequent discussion sessions.

The next requirement is that you carry out an independent project of study on any environmental topic that interests you and is approved by your advisers.

Finally, there is the Senior Seminar. This can follow any of a number of formats, but its major purpose is to allow Coordinate Majors in their last year an opportunity to pursue a subject — selected by common agreement — in considerable depth under the guidance of an expert.

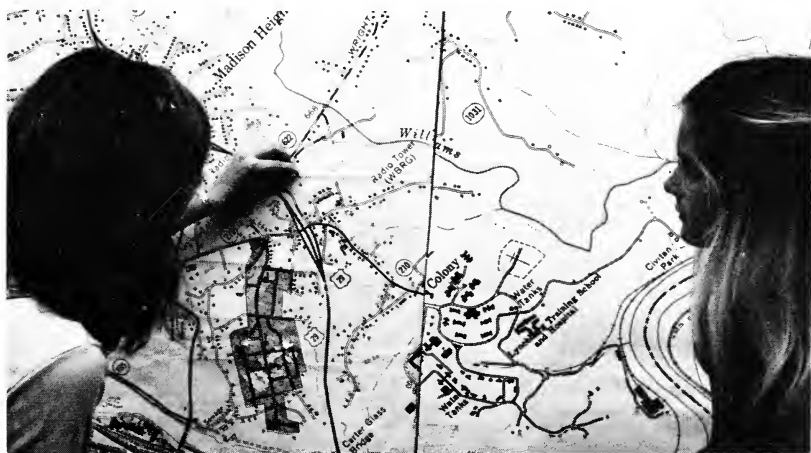
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There are other research opportunities open to Environmental Studies students at Sweet Briar. For one thing, the campus encloses a natural laboratory of about 3,000 acres of varied habitats — everything from ancient hardwood forests to pastureland, from mountains to streams to lakes — for those interested in

ecology. The Summer Research Participation Projects bring students (both men and women) from all over the country to work on local environmental problems as members of faculty-led research teams. More often than not, these projects are in the social rather than the natural sciences.



Another type of activity is applied environmental research performed for local agencies by student and faculty investigators. An example of this is a contract with a local pulp mill, signed in 1973, which called for a three-year survey of the biology and chemistry of a twenty-mile stretch of James River near the

College. Students perform both in the field and in the laboratory for course credit or pay, depending upon the nature of the work.

These are the main ingredients of Sweet Briar's Environmental Studies Program. If you're interested, just write to the Director of Admissions, Sweet Briar College, Sweet Briar, Virginia 24595, and say you want to hear more about ESP.

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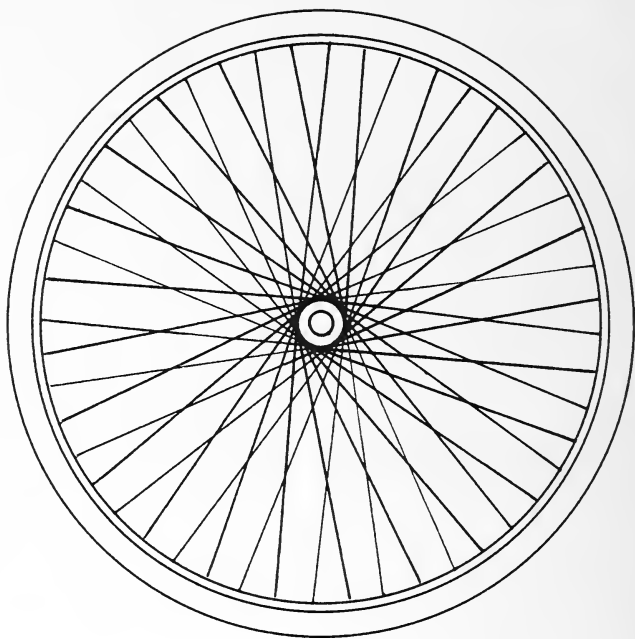
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Please address all correspondence to:

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